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SUBJECT: UGANDA: SPECIAL ADVISOR WOLPE'S MEETINGS ON  
REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Classified By: Ambassador Jerry Lanier for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Special Advisor for the Great Lakes Dr. Howard Wolpe and Ambassador Lanier discussed regional issues with Ugandan diplomats, parliamentarians, and defense officials on November 11. Ugandan officials welcomed reviving the Tripartite Plus mechanism, and the idea of a regional training initiative involving key security sector players. They stressed the need to accelerate economic integration and respond to concerns about eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia. Uganda's Chief of Defense Forces said that in addition to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) Uganda is increasingly focused on the DRC-based Ugandan rebel group Allied Democratic Front (ADF). Special Advisor Wolpe's visit advanced local interest in renewed regional integration and articulated a constructive way forward. End Summary.

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Tripartite Plus and Regional Integration  
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12. (C) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary Ambassador James Mugume attributed improved relations with the Great Lakes region to Tripartite Plus. Mugume welcomed the idea of further regional confidence-building exercises to reinvigorate Tripartite Plus and strengthen regional cohesion. Special Advisor Wolpe noted reports that Uganda is interested in joining the Economic Community of the Great Lakes, or the Commission Economique pour les Pays des Grand-Lacs (CEPGL). Mugume, however, indicated that Uganda had not been invited to join the CEPGL and that it was not interested in doing so. He said that Uganda is primarily focused on the East African Community (EAC) as the vehicle for economic integration. He said the EAC hopes to roll out a common currency by 2012, and suggested that EAC members focus on economic issues before tackling the longer term goal of regional federation.

13. (C) Mugume said the EAC is harmonizing legal standards, electoral laws, and governmental structures. Member states are also discussing a draft constitution, and studying federal systems to eventually design a federation allowing individual states to retain separate identities. Mugume identified land and residence rights as the main hurdles to regional integration, saying both issues are currently off the negotiating table. He said Tanzania fears totally lifting these restrictions could result in inflows of migrants from more densely-populated Rwanda and Burundi; however, the member states were in agreement on the need to facilitate the free flow of labor. Mugume said the U.S. could support regional integration by focusing on regional infrastructure requirements and the resolution of security threats posed by Somalia and Sudan.

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Regional Parliamentarians for Peace  
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¶4. (C) Two members of the Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace (AMANI), Betty Amongi and Kibanzanga Christopher, also welcomed the idea of regional confidence building exercises. AMANI (Swahili for harmony or peace) is a regional parliamentary group dedicated to conflict prevention and resolution. It supports regular visits between regional legislators to collaborate on common problems. Kibanzanga said it is crucial for parliamentarians to be involved in regional affairs because constituents like his own on the Congolese border are greatly affected by events in the DRC. Amongi and Kibanzanga praised improved relations between Rwanda, the DRC, and Uganda, but said working with the DRC remains a challenge and that Congolese legislators recently stormed out of an AMANI meeting with Rwandan counterparts over a dispute in the Kivus. Amongi and Kibanzanga said progress toward improved regional cohesion is still fragile and could easily be reversed if stability and state control is not restored in eastern DRC. They welcomed U.S. efforts to strengthen regional ties and said U.S. support would enhance AMANI's efforts toward the same goal.

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Regional Military Cooperation: LRA, ADF, and Somalia  
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¶5. (C) State Minister for Defense Jeje Odongo, Chief of

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Defense Forces General Aronda Nyakairima, and Land Forces Commander Lt. General Edward Wamala Katumba thanked the U.S. for supporting anti-LRA operations and Uganda's deployment to the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). Special Advisor Wolpe likewise expressed appreciation for Uganda's contributions to regional peacekeeping. General Aronda reported that coalition forces have forced the LRA into the Central African Republic and are steadily dismantling the group. Aronda said the joint operation has deepened levels of trust between Ugandan and DRC forces. However, he warned that there is "still unfinished business in eastern Congo," and alleged that the Ugandan rebel group Allied Democratic Front (ADF) is using eastern DRC as a base for eventual attacks on Uganda.

¶6. (C) Minister Odongo welcomed a revived Tripartite Plus and regional confidence-building exercises, including a regional training initiative that would involve key security sector players from the four countries that comprise Tripartite Plus. He suggested that Ministers of Defense lead any new Tripartite Plus initiatives because Defense officials are already working in close coordination with regional counterparts. Odongo also said Uganda is willing to host a Tripartite Plus meeting. Gen. Aronda added that practical experience accumulated while working with DRC, CAR, and southern Sudanese forces against the LRA, as well as with Burundians in AMISOM, has reinforced trust among regional militaries.

¶7. (C) Lt. General Wamala reiterated Uganda's conviction that AMISOM must change the status quo in Somalia to prevent an al Shabaab takeover. He said al Shabaab moves in groups of less than ten and can not sustain a fire fight for more than 30 minutes. While expressing Uganda's commitment to AMISOM, Wamala said Uganda is frustrated by the refusal of other African nations, excepting Burundi, to send peacekeepers to Somalia and noted that al Shabaab threatens the entire region. Wamala added that Somali piracy is impacting Uganda and others by driving up the cost of shipping insurance for exports and imports.

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Comment: Uganda Ready for Renewed Regional Integration  
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18. (C) Special Advisor Wolpe was well-known and fondly remembered by all his interlocutors. His visit significantly advanced Ugandan interest in pursuing regional integration and helped focus regional strategies to achieve this goal. A revived Tripartite Plus process could build on linkages forged among regional militaries during the offensive against the LRA and provide a constructive mechanism for renewed discussion of Great Lakes issues.

LANIER